REQUEST FOR URGENT REVIEW OF CHANGES MADE TO THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATING HOURS UNDER LEVEL 4 CURFEW

The Minister of Transport has been alerted to concerns that commuters making use of public transport may not meet the curfewed travel times gazetted under alert Level 4. The regulations as legislated in the Government Gazette 43284 dated 6 May 2020, states that: "(8)(1) Public Transport is permitted to operate from 05h00 to 19h00 and the driver must ensure that the drop off is completed by 19:00 ".

Considering travel time and business trading hours, a significant number of commuters making use of public transport are not likely to reach their homes before the recently instated cut-off time of 19h00. Most bus trips exceed one hour in duration therefore leaving passengers who are required to work till 18h00 with insufficient time to reach their homes. Furthermore, bus drivers are still required to return to depots, which further complicates compliance with the new regulation as most buses will still be on the road after 19h00.

The implication of the regulations, amongst others, are that Commuter services will have to be rescheduled and or curtailed to meet the cut-off time for public transport under the instituted curfew. Businesses will have to close earlier to allow their employees to make use of public transport.

Additionally, the Gazette of 4 May (No 43272) states that “No Public Transport is allowed between 20h00 to 05h00, save for essential and permitted service utilizing charter service arranged by employer”. SABOA, on behalf of the Industry, highlights that the requirement for charter services arranged by the employer is impractical as most employees make use of public transport services.
Taking the highlighted factors into consideration, SABOA implores government to review the amendments and recommends that the review take into consideration, the following:

1. The 1900 cut off time for public transport be amended to the original understanding of 20h00, with one hour’s allowance for passengers and drivers to make their way to their homes and for buses to return to depots/sleeping grounds.
2. All exemptions must be applied for, with approval from the applicable authority.

SABOA and the Industry, understands the unusual and challenging times currently at play and we request government to liaise with industry before promulgating regulations that are impractical to commuters, public transport operators and law enforcement agencies.

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